

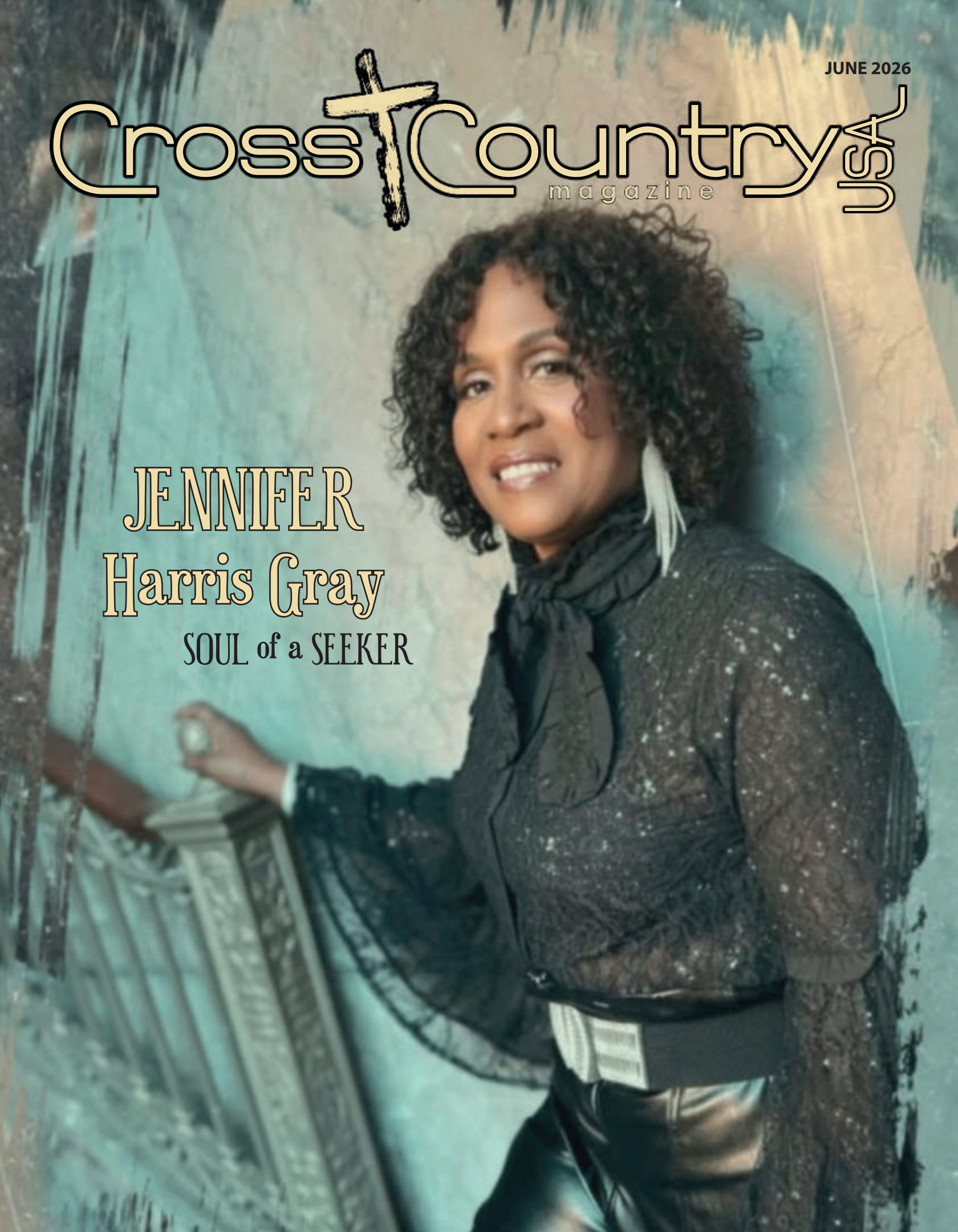
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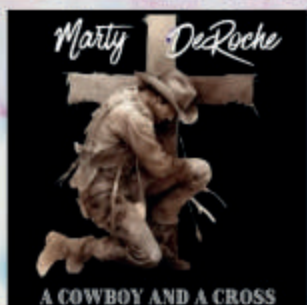
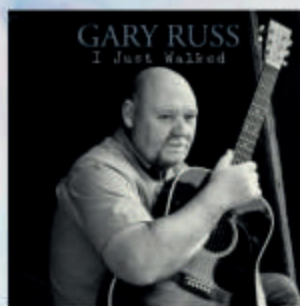
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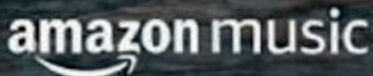
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From the Editor

As summertime approaches, I'm reminded of how this season has a way of slowing us down just enough to notice the blessings around us. June brings with it a special kind of warmth not just from the sun, but from the celebrations of Father's Day, a moment to honor the men who have shaped our lives with strength, guidance, and love.

Fathers come in many forms - biological dads, stepdads, grandfathers, uncles, mentors, and the quiet heroes who step in when life needs them most. Their impact is often steady and strong. They teach us how to stand firm, how to walk with purpose, and how to trust God even when the path ahead feels uncertain.

This season of sunshine reminds me of the way God's love mirrors the love of a good father - constant, protective, and full of grace. Scripture tells us that "The Lord is a father to the fatherless and a defender of widows" (Psalm 68:5). For those who celebrate with joy, and for those who carry a tender ache on this day, may you feel the comfort of a Heavenly Father who sees you, knows you, and walks beside you.

Summer also invites us to embrace simple joys: backyard cookouts, road trips with the windows down, children running barefoot through the grass, and evenings spent on the porch. Lay the phone down and enjoy every moment with your loved ones. These small moments become the memories that stay with us and remind us that God's goodness every day.

As we step into this season, may we celebrate the fathers who have shaped us, cherish the families we've been given, and savor the sunshine God pours over our lives. May this summer be filled with laughter, rest, and reminders that His love is always near.

Robin

Robin Tanner, Managing Editor

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THE ALASKAN SUNNYSIDE SISTERS

By Robin Tanner

L-R: Salima, Akulina, Alaniya, and Cherylann



There's Bluegrass - and then there's the Sunnyside way. Across festival grounds, concert halls, and even the Grand Ole Opry stage, four young sisters from Alaska are redefining what it means to be a rising Bluegrass act. Known collectively as The Alaskan Sunnyside Sisters, Akulina (15), Salima (13), Cherylann (12), and Alaniya (10) have built a national following with a sound as bright as their name and as joyful as the family bond that fuels their music.

Their harmonies shimmer. Their musicianship astonishes. Their energy radiates. And audiences across the country - more than 350,000 of them online - have taken notice.

"We're just four sisters playing music we love," they say. "And we want to bring a little sunshine wherever we go."

Before the guitars, banjos, mandolins, and upright bass, there was a piano. Each sister began Classical piano lessons around age five in their Alaskan home. Those early years shaped their discipline, their ear for harmony, and their instinct for musical storytelling. They learned to listen. They learned to blend. They learned to work.

But two years ago, everything changed. They discovered Bluegrass. Suddenly, the piano bench gave way to guitar straps, banjo picks, mandolin chops, and the deep heartbeat of an upright bass. They immersed themselves in the genre -

self-taught at first, then guided by some of the top instructors in Bluegrass and Country music. What began as curiosity became passion. Passion became skill. Skill became a phenomenon.

Remarkably, the Sunnyside Sisters are first-generation musicians. No family history. No inherited tradition. Just raw talent, relentless work, and a shared love for the music they create.

Their style blends Bakersfield Bluegrass, Gospel warmth, and a contemporary spark that feels both classic and fresh. Every performance carries the polish of seasoned professionals and the joy of siblings who genuinely love making music together.

In the past year alone, they've played more than 80 shows nationwide, including two appearances at the Grand Ole Opry, a milestone most musicians only dream of.

Their videos have reached millions. Their fanbase spans generations. And their stage presence - fun, warm, and impossibly tight - has made them one of the most talked-about young groups in the Bluegrass world.

The Alaskan Sunnyside Sisters draw inspiration from various Country and Bluegrass artists. Akulina shares, "I am inspired by Alison Krauss, especially her imagination, creativity, and the way she chooses songs and instrumentation with her band Union Station."

Salima says, "I am inspired by The Grascals. As a band, we also love The Isaacs and Dailey & Vincent, whose harmonies have influenced the way we sing together."

They may be young, but the siblings have already experienced incredible highlights in their career including playing on the historic circle at the Grand Ole Opry. "Playing on the Grand Ole Opry has been incredible! Our debut performance with Old Crow Medicine Show was unforgettable - singing alongside such talented musicians was a dream come true. Our second Opry appearance recently was the 25th celebration of "O Brother, Where Art Thou," which was equally amazing, performing alongside many incredible artists. Every show and festival we play is memorable and being on stage with so many talented musicians is something we'll never forget."

As a young band, they have received early recognitions. Salima, the banjo player, placed fourth in a youth banjo competition, and the band earned fifth place in a youth competition as well as fifth place in the SPBGMA competition. Their album was the most downloaded on Airplay Direct for a day, and they celebrated a sold-out show in January. The band doesn't take these accolades lightly. "These milestones motivate us to keep sharing our music."

Their debut album, "The Sunnyside of Bluegrass," was released on June 1st 2025. "We named it after our band to reflect both our musical identity and a sunny, positive outlook on life. The album features many of our favorite songs and showcases the style and energy that define us as a band."

These sisters are proving age is just a number with their artistry and musicianship far beyond their years. "People often notice that we're young, and sometimes others might doubt

what we can accomplish. But we believe that your age doesn't limit what you can do, in fact, we're achieving things that nobody our age has done before. Our message is to be your own unique self," the girls collectively stated. "Even when people doubt you, follow your own path, work hard, and embrace what makes you different - amazing things can happen."

The Alaskan Sunnyside Sisters have more goals they plan to reach. "We hope to collaborate with well-known artists in Country and Bluegrass, continue improving our harmonies and instrumentation, and tour year-round, performing at iconic venues like Red Rocks, The Gorge Amphitheatre, and Ryman Auditorium."

Their ultimate goal? "We also look forward to one day becoming members of the Grand Ole Opry, continuing to share our music with as many people as possible, and inspiring young musicians to follow their dreams."

Fans can expect a show full of energy, fun, and even a little comedy, along with tight harmonies and skilled instrumentation. "We perform a mix of original songs, Bluegrass and Country classics, and instrumentals, giving a full range of what we love to play. Our style has been described as Bakersfield Bluegrass, and we bring that unique flavor to every performance. With a lively stage presence, engaging interactions, and a mix of familiar favorites and originals, every show is a memorable experience that leaves fans smiling and tapping their feet."

Since launching their social media presence in June 2025, the Sunnyside Sisters have grown to more than 350,000 followers and millions of views. Their blend of technical skill, youthful charm, and family warmth has made them one of the most exciting young acts in American roots music.

They've been nominated for four categories in the 2026 Josie Music Awards, including: 'Bluegrass Group of the Year,' 'Fan Choice Band of the Year,' 'Musician of the Year' (Salima Shamanov), and 'Vocalist of the Year Under 18' (Akulina Shamanov).

And they're not slowing down. They recently announced: "We're raising funds to get a van for the band so we can travel and keep doing what we love."

They've also been invited to perform on the Bluegrass Cruise to the Caribbean, sailing November 2-7, 2026. "We hope you'll come along and make some wonderful memories with us," they say.

Plenty of young musicians are talented. Plenty of family bands are charming. But the Sunnyside Sisters are something rare: a group whose artistry, discipline, and joy converge into a sound that feels both timeless and brand-new. They are polished but playful. Professional but warm. Young but already seasoned.

And they are only just beginning. Their story is still being written - one harmony, one show, one burst of laughter at a time. And if their first steps are any indication, the future of Bluegrass is about to get a whole lot sunnier.

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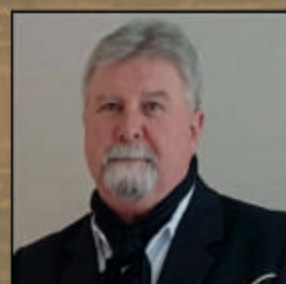
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DON SCHLITZ • DAVID ALLAN COE



Don Schlitz

August 29, 1952 – April 16, 2026

Don Schlitz was born on August 29, 1952 and raised in Durham, North Carolina. Schlitz briefly attended Duke University before moving to Nashville at age 20. Arriving with \$80 in his pocket, he set to Music Row, and his talent was recognized and fostered early on by greats, including Bob McDill and Bobby Bare.

Schlitz became one of the first performers at the now-iconic Bluebird Café in Nashville. He and friends Thom Schuyler, J. Fred Knobloch and Paul Overstreet originated the Café's songwriter-in-the-round format in 1985. On Tuesday nights, Schlitz held court at the venue with his "Don For A Dollar" show, charging a cover of \$1 each night.

Schlitz's first-ever cut was Kenny Rogers' *The Gambler*, setting an incredible standard he would meet for the rest of his career. The then-23-year-old songwriter celebrated a massive crossover hit that traveled far and wide, winning a Grammy for 'Best Country Song' in 1978, and the Country Music Association's 'Song of the Year' in 1979.

Following his first big hit, Schlitz continued to have stunning success. His 50 top 10 singles have played major roles in the careers of Rogers, Randy Travis, The Judds, The

Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Tanya Tucker, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Keith Whitley, Alison Krauss and many others.

Schlitz notched 25 No. 1s in his career. He was the ASCAP 'Country Songwriter of the Year' from 1988 to 1991, and won three CMA 'Song of the Year' Awards, two ACM 'Song of the Year' awards and two Grammys across his five decades in music.

As a writer, his hit Country standards included: *The Gambler*, *On the Other Hand*, *Forever and Ever*, *Amen*, *He Thinks He'll Keep Her*, *The Greatest*, *When You Say Nothing At All* and more to an impressive list of hit songs

Schlitz was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Association Hall of Fame in 1993, and he went into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in New York in 2012. In 2017, Schlitz was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame, joining only five other songwriters in the Hall at that time, including Bobby Braddock, Hank Cochran, Harlan Howard and Boudleaux and Felice Bryant.

In 2022, he became the only non-artist songwriter inducted as a member of the Grand Ole Opry in the show's 100-year history. He commonly performed over the last few years, joking with the audience that they may not know who he was, but they knew his songs.

The North Carolina native passed away on April 16 at a Nashville hospital after a sudden illness. He was 73. "We are heartbroken by the news of the passing of Don Schlitz. Don loved his family, his home state of North Carolina, and above all, songs and songwriters. He carried that love into every room, every stage and every lyric he ever wrote," Sarah Trahern, Country Music Association CEO, shared in a statement.

Echoing that sentiment, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum CEO Kyle Young said, "Don Schlitz's place as a songwriting great would be secure had he never written *The Gambler* or had he only written *The Gambler*. Nashville was richer for his presence and is lesser for his absence."





David Allan Coe

September 6, 1939 – April 29, 2026

David Allan Coe's story began far from the spotlight, in Akron, Ohio, where he was born on September 6, 1939. His early years were marked by turbulence and instability, the kind that can shape a young soul before it ever has a chance to understand the world. By the age of nine, he found himself in reform school, beginning a long stretch of institutional life that would carry him through nearly two decades in various correctional facilities.

It was in those stark, confined spaces that music first became his refuge. Fellow inmate Screamin' Jay Hawkins recognized something in the young man - a spark, a voice, a storyteller waiting to be heard - and encouraged him to write. Coe later said that music was the one thing no one could take from him, even in solitary confinement. In those years, songs became his way of surviving, imagining, and holding on to the parts of himself that the world had not yet seen.

When he finally walked free in 1967, he carried with him not just a past but a fierce determination to build a future. He arrived in Nashville in a hearse - a symbol as stark and strange as the life he'd lived - and parked it outside the Ryman Auditorium. From that unlikely perch, he began the long climb from ex-convict to Country music icon.

By 1969, he had secured his first recording contract, and in 1970 he released "Penitentiary Blues," an album that bore the raw truth of where he'd come from. The 1970s would become his defining decade: he wrote the haunting *Would You Lay With Me (In a Field of Stone)*, which became a number-one hit for Tanya Tucker; he signed with Columbia Records; and he introduced the world to his masked "Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy" persona, a symbol of the outsider he had always been.

His songs traveled far beyond him. *You Never Even Called Me by My Name* became a Country standard. *Take This Job and Shove It*, the working-class anthem he penned, became a number-one hit for Johnny Paycheck and a rallying cry for countless Americans. He chronicled his own journey in his 1978 autobiography "Just for the Record," a testament to a life that refused to fit neatly into any category.

Through the 1980s and beyond, Coe continued to carve his place in Country music's evolving landscape. He was the first to record *Tennessee Whiskey*, a song that would later find new life through George Jones and Chris Stapleton. His own hit *The Ride* - a ghostly encounter with Hank Williams - remains one of his most beloved recordings. He toured with artists as varied as Willie Nelson, Neil Young, and Kid Rock, and even ventured into metal with members of Pantera on the 2006 project "Rebel Meets Rebel."

Yet behind the outlaw image and the rhinestone mask was a man who loved deeply. His wife, Kimberly Hastings Coe, stood by him for many years as his partner, confidant, and friend. He was a father to five children, each carrying a piece of his legacy in their own way.

On April 29, 2026, at the age of 86, David Allan Coe passed away in a hospital following a period of declining health.

Coe's life was never simple, never polished, never predictable. But it was undeniably American: a story of hardship, reinvention, rebellion, and the relentless pursuit of expression. He gave voice to the working class, the forgotten, the rough-edged, and the restless. His journey from prison cells to the heart of Music City remains one of the most remarkable arcs in Country music history.

He leaves behind a legacy built not on perfection, but on truth - raw, unvarnished, and unmistakably his own. And in that truth, his songs continue to live, carrying forward the spirit of a man who refused to be anything but himself.

Michael Ray Fain

The hills of Rye Cove in Stuart, Virginia is where Michael Ray Fain calls home.

"That feeling you get when you feel at home, kinda like spending time with an old friend, that's the way I feel when writing a song."

Story behind the the song, "Georgiana Alabama 1939"

I was on my way to play a show at the Georgiana Opry House in Georgiana Alabama, the same theatre where Hank Williams and the Drifting Cowboys had performed in 1939. I had some time to kill and was trying to beat the August heat, so I stopped by Hank's childhood home, which is also in Georgiana, just a couple of streets down from the theatre. As I stepped onto the front porch and walked over to the swing that was slowly swaying, a whistle started to blow, and a train passed by as I took a seat. Later that night at the very moment I stepped on stage where Hank once stood, that lonesome whistle started blowing again and I could feel the floor rumble under my feet as the train once again passed by. I could feel Hank right there with me as I sang, I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry. As I left the stage that night, I thought about the train and how it felt as if Hank was speaking directly to me in Hank fashion of course! Whistling out his approval of Country music that still cherishes steel guitar and encouraging me to stay the course and stay Country! On my way back home, I took the Lost Highway and stopped by Montgomery to visit Hank's grave and then drove to the riverfront park to get a picture with his statue. As soon as I stepped beside Hank's statue, that ol' lonesome whistle blew again and the train passed by one last time. I wrote "Georgiana Alabama 1939" the following week and made it up to Nashville a couple of weeks later to record it at the legendary Hilltop Recording Studio. I have been singing Hank's songs since I was a kid and it was an amazing experience to find the friend, I never had the pleasure to meet, in Georgiana Alabama 1939. I guess you could even say ol' Hank had a hand in writing this one!

A big thank you for playing and charting
"Georgiana Alabama 1939".
Thank you Grace Records Nashville!!



The Story Behind the Song

DADDY'S HAT

Written by Debra Camp and Christian Hutton

Recorded by Debra Camp

Staff, Cross Country USA

We celebrate Dad on Father's Day and reflect on memories growing up. Whether your Dad is with you for his special day or in Heaven, we hold to those memories and even special possessions they left behind. Debra Camp shares the inspiration of the song she co-wrote about her Dad and his cowboy hat.

"This song is a true story about my daddy. It is completely inspired by him and his life," Debra states. "He passed away in 2013, in Fort Worth, Texas, (that's where we're from). My Mom gave his silver belly hat to me right after he passed away. About two years ago, I pulled the hat box out of storage, and I was looking at his hat. As the lyric says, when I found it, and began looking at it, 'the thought came to me... I'm gonna wear his hat... bring it back to life.'"

Debra remembers the day the song came to her. "It was one of those spiritual moments when you feel God all over your thoughts and what's coming out of your mouth and from the heart. I grabbed a piece of paper, sat down at the piano, and began to write down the words and melody of this song."

"When I got to the second verse, I was having a difficult time expressing what I wanted to say. I sent it to one songwriter, but I didn't feel he understood where I wanted to go with the song. I then sent it to my friend, guitarist, and producer, Christian Hutton. Since he's a longtime family friend, he knew exactly what my heart was looking for in this song. With us both working together, we now have this beautiful story, for the world to hear, about *Daddy's Hat*."

"We actually went back to the Fort Worth Stockyards and shot a video and re-created my Mom and me buying this hat," she mentions. "All my family is in it, grandkids and all. It's a memory we will always cherish. A huge thanks to Mary Fay Jackson for shooting that video for us." (Video can be found on YouTube.)

Debra shares why this song is relatable to the listener. "The thing is, it's not just about my daddy's hat, it's about every little girl and her daddy's hat. It's about every older girl, and every teenage girl who loves their daddy, and who remembers that special hat that he wore (or that he still wears). Memories can be powerful and can literally take you back to that very special moment in time. My prayer is that whenever you listen to it, you will sing and dance along to it as YOU remember YOUR daddy and the special hat that he wore (or that he is still wearing), or something unique and special about him, pull it out of the box, put it on, ADD some bling to it (like I did) and "bring it back to life!"



www.debracampministries.com

Daddy's Hat

*Momma and I bought daddy a brand new hat
We bought it in Fort Worth at a western store
It was back in 78, same year I would graduate
He was proud of that hat
He wore it playing in his band
I found it just today and the thought came to me*

*I'm gonna wear his hat
Bring it back to life
There's a smile on my face*

*My saving grace
Yeah, I know where he is
He's with the King on high
And when I wear that hat his memory makes me smile*

*On Friday night he'd play music with his friends
On Saturday night, he'd do it all over again
Though many years had passed
He still wore that hat, and in his memory
That's what I'll do*

*I'm gonna wear his hat
Bring it back to life
There's a smile on my face
My saving grace
Yeah, I know where he is
He's with the King on high
And when I wear that hat his memory makes me smile*

*I wish that I could tell him that I miss him
I wish that I could hug his neck and kiss him
Even though he's far away
his memory will always be with me*

*I'm gonna wear his hat
Bring it back to life
There's a smile on my face
My saving grace
Yeah, I know where he is
He's with the King on high
And when I wear that hat his memory makes me smile
I thank the good Lord for that sweet daddy of mine!*

"Daddy's Hat" was written by Debra Camp and James Christian Hutton, BMI - July 2025



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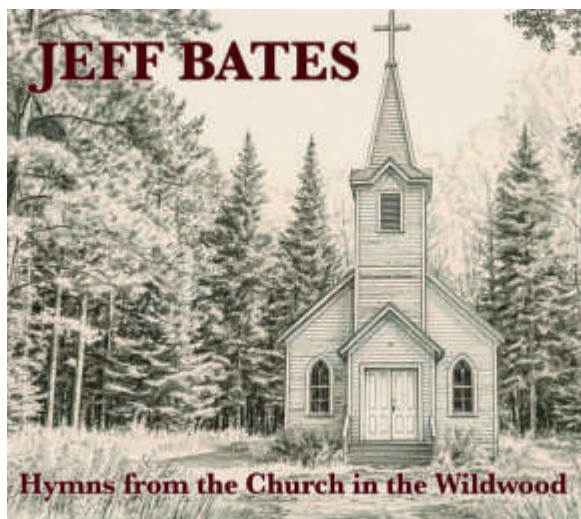


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CHRISTIAN COUNTRY MUSIC NEWS & SCOOPS

Jeff Bates Celebrates 25 Years of Meth Sobriety with First-Ever Gospel Album

Country music hitmaker Jeff Bates released his long-awaited first Gospel album, "Hymns From the Church in the Wildwood," on May 1 via Tall Grass Records. The project marks a deeply personal milestone for Bates, whose journey of faith, redemption, and gratitude is woven into every note.



This spring also marks a powerful anniversary in Bates' life - 25 years of sobriety after overcoming methamphetamine addiction and a period of incarceration that nearly derailed his future. Through faith and perseverance, Bates rebuilt his life, ultimately launching a successful Country music career that produced hits like *The Love Song*, *Long, Slow Kisses*, and *I Wanna Make You Cry*. He credits the Lord for his transformation, making this Gospel album both a celebration and a testimony of the faith that carried him through.

"Twenty-five years clean and sober," notes Bates. "I know, without a shadow of a doubt, that there is no way I could have ever stayed clean without God! So, above all, I hope and pray

that this album of hymns brings my Heavenly Father all the honor and all the glory He so richly deserves!"

Inspired by the hymns of his childhood and the faith that guided him out of darkness, "Hymns From the Church in the Wildwood" reflects the foundation that shaped both the man and the artist. The album's title echoes not only one of the most beloved songs in the collection, but also the spiritual home he found again - marking 25 years of sobriety and a life restored.

"When I was a small boy, my Mama would sing old Gospel hymns to me that she learned as a little girl in church," shares Bates. "I've never forgotten her voice, her melodies, nor the reverence and love she held in her heart for these songs. I have dreamed of sharing these songs with you all for a long, long time."

Produced with heartfelt authenticity and reverence, the album features timeless Gospel standards that have inspired generations.

"Thanks to my friend and brother Daniel 'Stubbs' Lucas, and his love for the same music that, like me, he grew up hearing, that dream has now become a reality," adds Bates. "We are both honored and blessed to present to you these "Hymns From The Church In The Wildwood," and we hope you enjoy them as much as we do!"

"With Hymns From the Church in the Wildwood," Jeff Bates comes full circle - honoring the songs of his youth, the faith that saved his life, and celebrating 25 years of sobriety with a message of hope, redemption, and grace.

Gaither Music Group Announces Self-Titled Solo Debut from Mike Rogers, First Single 'He Touched Me' Out Now

Gaither Music Group announces the release of *He Touched Me*, the debut solo single from DOVE Award-nominated musician, singer and songwriter Mike Rogers, available on all streaming platforms. The track previews Rogers' forthcoming self-titled album, "Mike Rogers," arriving now on CD and DVD.

A black promotional banner for Chapel Valley Music. On the left, the logo "Chapel Valley" is written in a white, elegant script font. To the right of the logo, the text "TAKING YOUR MINISTRY TO THE NEXT LEVEL." is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below the logo, the website "www.chapelvalleymusic.com" and the phone number "865-278-3681" are listed in white. On the right side of the banner, there are four logos: "INSPIRE" in a white circle, "Sanctuary" in a white diamond shape, "CHURCH HOUSE MUSIC" with a house icon, and "UpperRoom" with a house icon.



Best known in Nashville and throughout the Country, Gospel and Bluegrass communities for his musicianship, Rogers has spent years as a trusted presence onstage and in the studio. After launching his career as a drummer, he moved to Nashville to perform with Country artist Craig Morgan before joining Bluegrass legend Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver, where he stepped to the front of the stage playing acoustic guitar and singing lead.

In recent years, Rogers has become a member of Ricky Skaggs' Kentucky Thunder as well as the acclaimed quartet Brothers of the Heart, alongside Jimmy Fortune, Bradley Walker and Ben Isaacs. His solo debut marks a natural next chapter - one that showcases the tenor voice and interpretive depth that have long made him a standout among his peers.

Produced by award-winning artist and producer Ben Isaacs, "Mike Rogers" wraps Rogers' signature sound around a collection of Gospel standards and Country favorites that have shaped his decades-long journey. The project blends reverence for tradition with a fresh, personal delivery that reflects both his roots and his range. Vocal contributions to the album include Bill Gaither, Vince Gill, Ricky Skaggs, Mac Powell, Jimmy Fortune, The Isaacs, Bradley Walker, Emily Ann Roberts, and Sharon White to name a few.

The album features musicians Jeff King (electric guitar), Jenee Fleenor (fiddle), Josh Swift (dobro), Russ Carson (banjo), Ben Isaacs (upright bass), Doyle Lawson (mandolin), Greg

Ritchie (drums/percussion), Gordon Mote (piano/keys), Scotty Sanders (steel), Stuie French (electric guitar), and Ricky Skaggs (mandolin).

The companion DVD captures Rogers live in concert and features collaborations with many of the artists who have shared the stage with him over the years, highlighting the strong musical relationships that define his career.

The Malpass Brothers Bring Classic Country Sound to New Live Album and DVD "Satisfied: Country Gospel Classics"

The Malpass Brothers, the Country music duo consisting of brothers Chris and Taylor Malpass, recently released their new single *Satisfied* and kick off pre-orders for their forthcoming live album and DVD, "Satisfied: Country Gospel Classics," available June 26 via Gaither Music Group.



Known for their deep-rooted traditional style, The Malpass Brothers grew up in Goldsboro, North Carolina, immersed in the sounds of Country and Gospel music from an early age. Inspired by their grandfather's record collection and the artists who shaped the genre, the brothers have built a career on carrying that tradition forward with authenticity and respect. The first single, *Satisfied*, premiered digitally with *Cowboys & Indians* and is available now as an instant download with album pre-order. The performance captures the spirit that



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defines the duo - straightforward, harmony-driven Country music grounded in faith and timeless storytelling.

"These songs are the ones we grew up on," said The Malpass Brothers. "They were part of our everyday life at home, on the road, and backstage. When we set out to make this project, we wanted to keep it simple and honest, and let the songs speak the way they always have. Getting to do that live made it even more special."

Filmed live at TBN Studios in Hendersonville, Tennessee, "Satisfied: Country Gospel Classics" features a collection of beloved Hymns and Gospel standards performed in an intimate concert setting. Backed by a seasoned band, the project showcases the warmth, simplicity, and reverence that have become hallmarks of The Malpass Brothers' sound.

"Chris and Taylor have a deep respect for the traditions that shaped Country and Gospel music, and they bring that to life every time they step on stage," said Paul Sizelove, President of Sun Label Group and Gaither Music Group. "This project captures that authenticity in a powerful way, and we're proud to partner with them in sharing it with audiences everywhere."

Rooted in the timeless sounds of classic Country, The Malpass Brothers were inspired early on by legendary harmony duos and later mentored by steel guitar legend Don Helms. Handpicked by Merle Haggard as an opening act for seven years, the brothers have carried the torch for traditional Country across stages nationwide. Their debut album, "Memory That Bad," was produced by Haggard, followed by projects with Bluegrass Hall of Famer Doyle Lawson.

"Satisfied: Country Gospel Classics" will be released as an audio album, full-length DVD, and television special. The TV special will air on TBN, RFD-TV, The Miracle Channel, CTS, CTN, and Heartland. A radio special will premiere on SiriusXM Radio, and music from the project will also be featured on Bill Gaither's SiriusXM enLighten channel (Channel 150).

The full-length project will also be available to stream at Gaither TV+ or purchase the DVD and CD at Gaither.com.

Scott Sexton Announces Launch of Sexton Entertainment Group

Scott Sexton has announced the launch of his new venture, Sexton Entertainment Group, marking a new chapter following nearly eight years with 2911 Media, where he served as Vice President of Publicity. Drawing on years of experience

in publicity, media relations, and artist-focused campaign strategy, Sexton's new company will provide personalized communications support across the entertainment industry. The transition is beyond amicable and reflects great mutual respect and warm appreciation for the work accomplished together over the years.

Sexton Entertainment Group will focus on supporting artists, brands, and entertainment-driven projects through strategic storytelling, targeted media outreach, and a hands-on approach tailored to each client's unique voice and goals. With a strong track record and a deep understanding of today's media landscape, Sexton aims to build meaningful visibility and long-term momentum for those he represents.



"The last nearly eight years have flown by, and I am thankful for every minute at 2911 Media. Jeremy and I have had the opportunity to work with some incredible artists and projects, and I am grateful for the trust that was placed in me by Jeremy and by every client along the way. The future is bright for both of us, and while our professional paths are now taking different directions, I have nothing but respect for Jeremy, 2911 Media, and all we built together." – Scott Sexton, President, Sexton Entertainment Group

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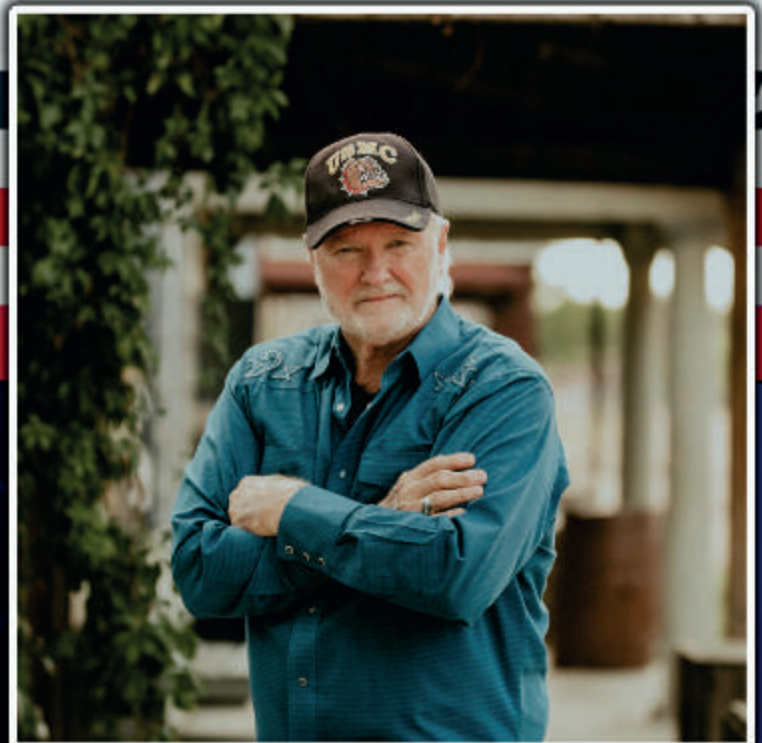
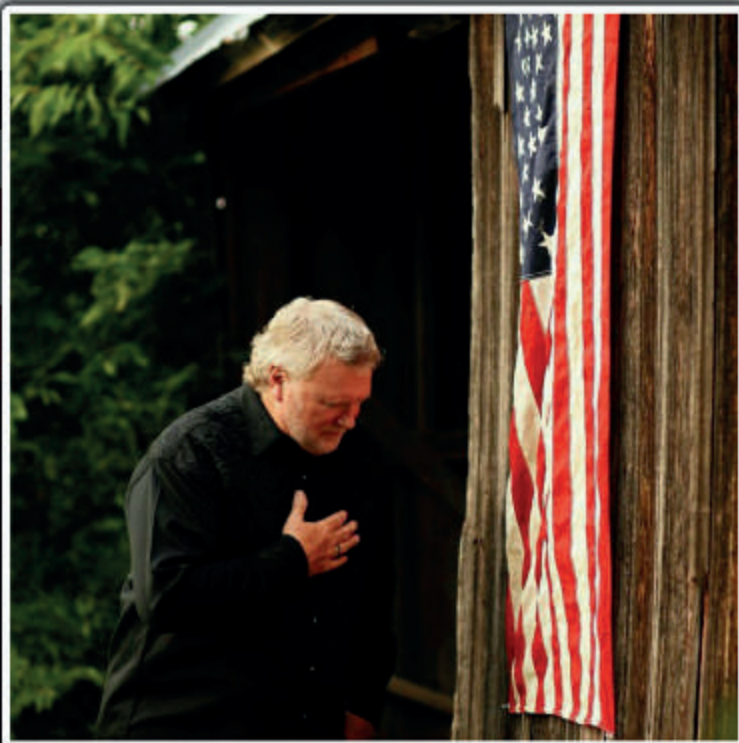
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JESUS IS COMING, GET READY AND STAY READY!

<<< *Cross Country Report, continued from page 20*

"Scott has been an important part of 2911 Media's growth and success over the past several years, and I'm deeply grateful for his contributions, his loyalty, and the care he has shown our clients and team. We support him as he steps into this new season with Sexton Entertainment Group, and we do so with respect, appreciation, and genuine goodwill. This is a friendly transition, and we're proud of all we've built together while looking ahead to the future with optimism." – Jeremy Westby, President & CEO, 2911 Media

Scott Sexton is a Nashville-based publicist who began his career as a writer and interviewer, later working with members of the Grand Ole Opry and other Country music icons before relocating to Nashville in 2014. In 2018, he joined 2911 Media, where he served as Vice President of Publicity. Over the years, he built a reputation for thoughtful, relationship-driven publicity and artist-focused campaign work.

Beyond his professional work, Sexton is deeply committed to giving back to the music community. He founded Country for a Cause, an annual benefit that has raised nearly \$300,000 for Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. He has also supported organizations like the American Federation of Musicians (Nashville) Emergency Relief Fund and Music Health Alliance through the Dottie West Birthday Bash. These events have featured an impressive lineup of Country music legends and have become a meaningful part of Nashville's charitable music efforts. His work has also helped artists reach major career milestones, including Grand Ole Opry debuts, Hall of Fame inductions, national media exposure, and legacy honors.

During his nearly eight years at 2911 Media, Sexton contributed to publicity efforts on behalf of a wide range of artists, legacy acts, and entertainment projects, helping support major career milestones, media visibility, special honors, and long-term brand growth.

For more information and full roster, visit sextonentertainmentgroup.com.

The Kody Norris Show is Celebrating America250 With Their "Spirit of America" Album and Latest Single 'Good Ol' USA'

Award-winning Country and Bluegrass group The Kody Norris Show has premiered the official music video for their latest single, *Good Ol' USA*. The video made its premiere on RFD-TV and Taste of Country.

Released on Rebel Records, *Good Ol' USA* is the newest offering from the band's forthcoming album, "Spirit of America," due out Friday, June 26. Written by Kody Norris and Larry Chunn, the song arrives as the nation prepares to celebrate America250, capturing the pride, joy, and unmistakable musical spirit that have become hallmarks of The Kody Norris Show.



Filmed on location at Mount Rushmore, the *Good Ol' USA* music video takes the song's patriotic message to one of the most iconic landmarks in the country. With the band's signature rhinestone style, high-energy performance, and a sweeping visual backdrop tied directly to America's story, the video brings together Bluegrass tradition, national pride, and the larger-than-life personality that fans have come to expect from The Kody Norris Show.

"*Good Ol' USA* embodies all the feelings of celebrating America250," shares Kody Norris. "When we began seeking out locations to film a music video, we wanted something iconic that would make a statement. Mount Rushmore was at the top of our list but presented several monumental challenges (no pun intended)! With the help of some amazing park rangers, our top-notch team and after putting several thousand miles of asphalt behind us, our dream video set became a reality! We hope the viewers enjoy watching this one as much as we did filming. This is definitely one we will never forget!"

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The *Good Ol' USA* video follows the release of the single, which first premiered with Center Stage Magazine and gave fans another taste of "Spirit of America." The full project, arriving June 26, finds The Kody Norris Show honoring the music, stories, and values that have shaped generations, blending beloved American themes with fresh original material and the band's unmistakable "showgrass" sound.

With "Spirit of America," The Kody Norris Show leans fully into a season of celebration. The album is designed as both a tribute and a rallying cry, arriving at a defining cultural moment as America approaches its 250th anniversary. From the bounce and pride of *Good Ol' USA* to the broader collection of songs that honor home, faith, service, unity, and heritage, "Spirit of America" promises to be one of the band's most timely and meaningful releases to date.

The group recently kicked off their 2026 'Spirit of America' tour, which includes more than 60 shows in 20 states, including Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, and more. They will also be heading to Colorado for their first-ever RockyGrass with artists including Punch Brothers, The Del McCoury Band, Tim O'Brien, Steep Canyon Rangers, and more.

The Kody Norris Show continues bringing Bluegrass music to both core fans of the genre and new audiences. They are a youthful voice in Bluegrass music, and insiders have awarded them multiple IBMA & SPBGMA Nominations and wins, including 'Entertainer of the Year,' 'Instrumental Group of the Year,' 'Guitar Performer of the Year' for Kody Norris, and 'Fiddler of the Year' for Mary Rachel Nalley-Norris.

The Kody Norris Show's album "All Suited Up" (2021) charted at #7, and "Rhinestone Revival" (2023) at #8 on the Billboard charts. Their trademarked high-energy style delivers an unrivaled live show experience. The band has played the Ryman Auditorium, Grand Ole Opry, SiriusXM, and other stages worldwide. Rife with rhinestones, loaded with laughs, and a heaping helping of high-powered traditional music, The Kody Norris Show is truly one of a kind.

For more information, visit thekodynorrisshow.com.

Grammy-Nominated Artist Anne Wilson Extends the Stars Tour Through the Fall

Singer and songwriter Anne Wilson is extending her 2026 nationwide The STARS Tour into the fall with 25 additional

dates across the U.S. The new leg adds to the previously announced 30 dates, bringing Wilson's live show to cities across the West Coast, Midwest, South and more. Special guests Peter Burton and Aodhán King are set to join on select dates.

"These nights of worship, music and community have meant so much to me, and I truly feel like we're just getting started. I cannot wait to see everyone this fall on The STARS Tour!," shares Wilson.

Named after her third studio album, "Stars," released last fall via Capitol Christian Music Group, the tour continues a major season for Wilson. In April, she performed the national anthem for NASA's launch of the Artemis II mission at Kennedy Space Center - NASA's first crewed mission to the moon in more than 50 years.



For Wilson, the moment marked a full-circle milestone. Before music, she dreamed of becoming an astronaut, a childhood fascination that later helped inspire "Stars" and its title track, where she sings, "thought I'd be an astronaut, land on the moon, but life happens fast and I grew up too soon."

Wilson is set to perform as a nominee for 'Female Artist of the Year' at this year's K-LOVE Fan Awards and recently announced her third book, "Rebel: Following Jesus When the World Walks the Other Way," set for release on June 9.



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L to R: Bill Hilf, Chair, American Prairie Board of Directors, Vince Gill, Ken Burns

(Photo by Light of Blue Photography)

Vince Gill awarded 2026 Ken Burns American Heritage Prize

Grammy Award® winner and Country Music Hall of Famer Vince Gill accepted the 2026 Ken Burns American Heritage Prize at an event held on May 6 at the American Museum of Natural History.

Named in honor of America's most revered visual historian and documentary filmmaker, the Ken Burns American Heritage Prize recognizes an individual whose body of work has advanced our collective understanding of the indomitable American spirit.

Award-winning filmmaker Sarah Botstein, who has worked alongside Ken Burns for nearly 30 years, introduced her mentor and dear friend by saying, "It's so fitting that we're here tonight, celebrating the incredible work of American Prairie over this last quarter century. It's an organization that Ken loves deeply and that connects us all so intimately to the American landscape, that land has been such an important part of his filmmaking."

She added, "Our history is often a reflection of great triumphs and hard truths. These are the stories that make us who we are. We're so fortunate this evening to have Ken together with the great musician and songwriter Vince Gill. They share the belief that the power of storytelling, whether in film or music, has the potential to bring us together as a people."

Burns took the stage and welcomed Vince Gill by saying, "I couldn't be more pleased to help honor one of the truly great musicians and human beings, Vince Gill, someone who is affectionately known as the 'nicest guy in Nashville.' I got to

know Vince when he graciously helped us in making our 2019 documentary series *Country Music*, and it wouldn't have been what it was without him."

Burns went on to say, "Tonight, we are celebrating two vital American traditions - the arts and conservation, both of which act as a kind of conscience to our nation. This is why I'm particularly delighted to present this prize to Vince Gill tonight. I can spot the kinship of a storyteller a prairie mile away."

"In Country music, we explored the idea that this quintessentially American art form is simply 'three chords and the truth.' But every once in a while, an artist comes along who elevates that truth into something transcendent. He is a master of his craft, a keeper of the flame, and quite simply, one of the finest souls I've had the privilege to work with, document, and learn from. It is my distinct honor to present this year's American Heritage Prize to a man whose heart is as big as the Montana sky."

After receiving the bison bronze, Gill thanked Ken Burns and American Prairie saying, "With a grateful heart, thank you for this amazing honor. I think the world of Ken Burns and I think the world of what you're doing - and you're trying to make this place better, trying to make it matter, trying to make us have some reverence for what's been around for a long, long time."

Gill then took to the stage to perform two of his hit singles *One More Last Chance* and *Whenever You Come Around*. He ended the performance with a new song titled, *The Whole World*, calling it the one song that encapsulates his heart.

The Music & Legacy of Jeannie Seely

Her deep, moving vocals earned her the enduring title “Miss Country Soul,” a title that followed her through a remarkable seven-decade career. An esteemed singer, songwriter, producer, actress, author, and one of the true Grand Ladies of Country Music, she leaves behind a legacy admired by Country legends and rising artists alike. We honor the extraordinary life and career of Jeannie Seely.



Born July 6, 1940, in Titusville, Pennsylvania, Seely grew up on a farm outside nearby Townville. Barely tall enough to reach the dial on her family’s Philco console radio, she tuned in the Grand Ole Opry on WSM 650 - a sound that would shape her destiny.

By age 11, she was singing on Meadville’s WMGW Saturday morning radio show, and at 16 she was performing on WICU-TV in Erie. At Hillbilly Park near Franklin, Pennsylvania, she met performers such as Bill Monroe, Ralph Stanley, Jean Shepard, Little Jimmy Dickens, and Wilma Lee & Stony Cooper, never imagining she would one day share the Opry stage with them.

A cheerleader, majorette, and honor student at Townville High School, Jeannie sang in amateur contests and performed at weekend dances across northwestern Pennsylvania. After graduating in 1958, she worked at the Titusville Trust Company while taking night classes at the American Institute of Banking in Oil City.

When Seely was 21, she packed her car and headed to California. She first worked at a Beverly Hills bank before accepting a lower-paying secretarial job at Liberty and Imperial Records. It was a move that placed her inside the music business. She began writing songs for Four Star Music and became a regular on the Hollywood Jamboree television series alongside a then-unknown Glen Campbell. Her songwriting success led to a recording contract with Challenge Records and a West Coast tour.

In 1964, the Country and Western Academy (later the Academy of Country Music) named her ‘Most Promising Female Artist.’ She was encouraged by friend Dottie West, who had recorded one of her songs, to move to Nashville. Seely moved to Nashville in 1965 and signed with Monument Records. Her breakthrough hit *Don’t Touch Me* made her only

the third female Country artist to win a GRAMMY®. She went on to appear on Billboard’s Country singles chart for 13 consecutive years and earned ‘Most Promising New Artist’ honors from Cashbox, Record World, and Billboard.

On September 16, 1967, Seely fulfilled her lifelong dream when she became a member of the Grand Ole Opry - the first Pennsylvania native to do so. She later became the first woman to regularly host Opry segments and famously changed the image of female performers by being the first to wear a mini-skirt on the Opry stage. Her partnership with fellow Opry star Jack Greene became one of the most successful duos and touring shows in Country music history. In 2022, the Opry honored her for 5,000+ performances, a milestone unlikely to ever be matched.

A BMI-awarded songwriter, Seely’s compositions were recorded by Country Music Hall of Fame members including Dottie West, Merle Haggard, Connie Smith, Ray Price, Willie Nelson, Faron Young, Ernest Tubb, Little Jimmy Dickens, and Hank Williams Jr. Her songs also reached artists as varied as Irma Thomas, Rhonda Vincent, Chris LeDoux, Moe Bandy, Boyz II Men, and Seal. Her composition *Yours* was named ‘Song of the Year’ at the 2022 Arkansas Country Music Awards.

Seely starred in major stage productions including *Always... Patsy Cline*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, and *Could It Be Love*. She hosted her own Armed Forces Network radio show, toured for the troops across Europe and Asia, and authored the book “*Pieces of a Puzzled Mind*.” Her recordings span seven decades, from her Top 10 Billboard album “*The Seely Style*” to her Curb Records release “*An American Classic*,” featuring her third duet with Willie Nelson. She also appeared in Nelson’s film *Honeysuckle Rose* and on its platinum soundtrack.

Jeannie Seely received many accolades and special achievements during her legendary career including: Music City Walk of Fame inductee (2018), Honorary Doctor of Arts, Lincoln Memorial University (2019), Standing Ovation Award, Influencing Women Awards Gala (2019), Legacy Award, Nashville Women in Film & Television WIFT ALICE Awards (2022), National recognition on the CMA Awards broadcast (2022), CMA Joe Talbot Award (2023), and the SOURCE Jo Walker-Meador Lifetime Achievement Award (2024). Seely also set a new record as the vocalist with the longest span between recording sessions at RCA Studio B - 60 years.

Following her 5,381st Opry performance in September 2024, the Jeannie Seely Interchange was dedicated at the Briley Parkway exit leading to the Grand Ole Opry House. In March 2025, Sony Music Publishing Nashville honored her during Women's History Month by releasing three reimagined versions of her songs in collaboration with rising female artists.

In late 2024, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum added a permanent display honoring Seely to its Sing Me Back Home exhibit. Her Billboard 'Most Promising Female Vocalist' Award is also featured in a special concourse exhibit near the Omni Hotel.

In July 2024, Seely returned to her Pennsylvania roots for the unveiling of new "Home of Jeannie Seely" signs in

Townville - fittingly at the Townville Fire Station, where she first performed before a live audience.

Seely's final public appearance came on March 1, 2025, at the rebranded opening of the Legends of Country Music Museum in Nashville's Music Valley. Her image adorns the building's exterior, and an updated exhibit honors her inside. In April 2025, the SAG-AFTRA Studio Space on Music Row was named in her honor.

Seely proudly served as producer for Bluegrass group Cutter & Cash and The Kentucky Grass and was actively planning their next recording session. Throughout her career, she championed musicians' rights and worked tirelessly to strengthen the roles of artists, musicians, and songwriters. She fostered fellowship and camaraderie everywhere she went - especially at the Grand Ole Opry, where she connected generations of performers.

As of her final Opry appearance on February 22, she had made 5,397 Opry performances - more than any artist in the Opry's 100-year history. Since 2018, she had also hosted her weekly Sundays with Seely show on Willie's Roadhouse on SiriusXM. At the time of her death, she was considered the oldest active female Country music entertainer.

Jeannie Seely passed away on August 1, 2025, at age 85. Her voice, spirit, and trailblazing influence continues to echo across Country music. Her legacy - rich, soulful, and unmistakably her own - lives on.



Jennifer Harris Gray

SOUL of a SEEKER

By Margrette Denise Harris Butler

Before the spotlight ever found her, Jennifer Harris Gray was already being shaped for it - quietly, deliberately, divinely. Long before audiences heard the power in her voice, God was carving out the path that would one day place her at the forefront of Gospel music, carrying a sound born from trials, triumphs, and an unshakable pursuit of His presence. She is not merely a singer; she is a seeker - one whose journey has forged a ministry as soulful as her music and as compelling as the testimony behind it.

Long before Jennifer Harris Gray fully embraced her calling, God was already arranging the path that would one day place her center-stage - singing with fire, ministering with tenderness, and drawing souls to Christ through the unmistakable depth of her voice. What she carries is not merely talent; it is testimony wrapped in melody.

When the right elements of music and ministry collide, something explosive happens. Jennifer is living proof of that divine chemistry.

She is, at her core, a seeker of God - one shaped by trials that carved strength into her spirit. Independence came early, hardship came often, and a devastating car accident stole nearly ten years of vitality. "There were seasons I didn't know if I'd ever feel whole again," Jennifer reflects. "But God never stopped fighting for me, even when I didn't have the strength to fight for myself."

Through every valley, God placed keepers around her - chief among them her husband, Terry, who worked three jobs to sustain their family during the darkest years. Without the unwavering support of family and friends, the battles might have swallowed her. But God was building a thruway for His servant, even when the road ahead seemed washed out.

The soul of a seeker is forged differently. They battle in the spirit daily, sometimes fueled with supernatural energy, other times drained by the weight of compassion and the intensity of their calling. Their pace is not set by earthly voices. Their decisions are not shaped by human approval. God holds the key to their heart, and in return, they walk in blessings that defy measurement.

A seeker never blends into the crowd. They stand out - marked, anointed, unmistakably set apart. People often sense the calling before they understand it, drawn to the presence resting upon them.

Jennifer's rise into the music industry came with the release of her first professional single, *I'm Not Worried*, in October 2025. DJs took notice immediately, and her momentum has only accelerated since. Her recent Dove Award nomination confirms what heaven already knew - her labor has not been in vain.

Music has been woven into her since childhood. She remembers sitting on the knee of her great-grandfather Josephus as he bounced her on one leg and sang *Three Blind Mice* or *Here, Rattler, Here*. Bluegrass may have been the soil, but her musical branches reach far: Country, Contemporary, modern, spiritual, cultural, and explosive Gospel that shakes the soul awake.

Born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Jennifer arrived as the older of twins, already taking up space, already stepping

into the spotlight. Her true home, however, has always been the rural routes of Thomasville in Randolph County. No matter how far she travels, her roots remain anchored in the people who shaped her, loved her, and poured into her spirit.

The call from promoter Debbie Bennett announcing Jennifer's upcoming cover feature in *Cross Country USA Magazine* would be highlighted during Sunday Morning Country at the Grand Ole Opry House was a moment of holy pause. Joy rose, but so did memory. Her mother, Cecil Marie, her biggest fan, would not be here to see it. Nor would Grandma Purple, Grandma Lenora, or Great-Grandmother Clara - women of strength whose influence still echoes in Jennifer's life. Their legacy stands with her every time she steps into the light.

Debbie Bennett, CEO of Grace Records Nashville LLC, speaks of Jennifer with unmistakable conviction: "Jennifer is a remarkable, talented, and gifted artist. She puts God first in everything she does. From the moment I met her, I knew God had a special plan for her."



Producers Rocky and Tamie Smith have helped Jennifer refine her sound and embrace her identity as a Sister in the Lord. Tamie's coaching - "Do it this way, sister!" - always lands right on target, and Rocky's musicianship completes the dynamic. Together, they form a powerhouse team.

"We are excited for Jennifer," they shared. "Her energy is contagious. We're honored she chose Un-Marked Road Studios to continue her musical journey."

Jennifer herself sums up her journey with a clarity that only a seeker can carry: "I've learned that when God calls you, He equips you. Every setback became a setup for

what He was preparing me to do."

And so she presses forward - bold, anointed, unstoppable.

The soul-seeker never waits for the hat to drop. She catches it midair and throws it toward the wildest dream God has dared her to imagine. She lands on solid ground while others call it shaky. She is planted by God, surrounded by builders and keepers, walking a path only heaven could design.

Jennifer Harris Gray is not just rising. She is becoming.

In the end, Jennifer stands as living proof that when God marks a life, no detour, delay, or decade of loss can cancel the assignment. Her journey - scarred, sanctified, and strengthened - has become the very sound she now carries into every room she enters. And as her ministry continues to rise, one truth remains unshakably clear: the soul-seeker will always find her footing on holy ground, because the God who called her is the same God who goes before her, opening doors no man can shut and writing a story only heaven could compose.

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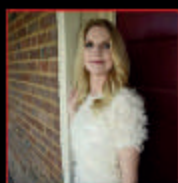
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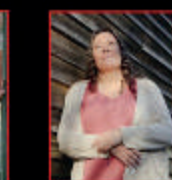
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JIMMY FORTUNE



STORY OF AN AMERICAN DREAMER

By Robin Tanner

Some stories begin with a single moment that changes everything. For Jimmy Fortune, it was a Thanksgiving night jam session that opened the door to a legendary career, a lifetime of songwriting, and a testimony that continues to inspire audiences around the world.

Jimmy Fortune's life reads like the kind of American story people don't believe anymore - a boy raised deep in the hills of Nelson County, Virginia, who grew up singing in church, fell in love with the sound of a radio, and eventually stepped onto the world stage as the tenor voice of one of the most decorated groups in Country music history. For more than two decades, he traveled with the legendary Statler Brothers, later inducted into both the Gospel Music Hall of Fame and the Country Music Hall of Fame. During those years, Jimmy penned several of their No. 1 hits, including *Elizabeth*, *My Only Love*, and *Too Much on My Heart*, and co-wrote the top-10 hit *More Than a Name on a Wall*. His voice appears on many of the Statlers' gold, platinum, and multi-platinum recordings, and he has performed in every U.S. state, throughout Canada, and before crowds of more than 100,000 people. Through it all, he has carried one message: a love for God, family, and country.

Jimmy was the seventh of nine children, raised in a rural community where simplicity shaped the soul. "We lived way back in the sticks, and we didn't have a radio or TV until I was six years old," he recalls. "We would sing together as a family at church." When his father finally bought a car with a radio, the world opened. Country music, Gospel music, and the great voices of the era poured through the speakers. "I was in love with music right from the start."

Life in Nelson County was modest but rich in its own way. His father played square dances on Saturday nights, often taking young Jimmy along. "We were poor, but we didn't know it. We loved life. It was a simple time, and I miss that in a lot of ways."

Nelson County was also home to Earl Hamner Jr., creator of *The Waltons*. Jimmy remembers their friendship warmly. "We were good friends and swapped stories about our families. When you see *The Waltons*, you pretty much see the same place we grew up." Both men were later honored with bronze statues in their hometown - a recognition Jimmy still finds humbling. "I still have to pinch myself about that. That's pretty awesome to be recognized with him."

Jimmy's musical influences were as broad as they were heartfelt: Hank Williams, Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline, Charley Pride, Glen Campbell, Elvis, The Beatles, and Gospel greats

like the Cathedrals and George Beverly Shea. "If something touched my heart and soul, that's what I leaned toward."

He knew early that singing was his calling. "Kids would give me a nickel to sing a song, and I always had a little jingle in my pocket. I loved the sound of my voice echoing in the school restroom. It made me feel good, and I hoped it made others feel good too."



For nearly a decade, Jimmy played the Virginia club circuit - six nights a week, four hours a night. Then came Thanksgiving night, 1981, a moment he calls a "God thing." Unbooked that evening, he stopped by a jam session and met Lew DeWitt, the Statler Brothers' original tenor. Lew returned to the group with a message: There's a kid across the mountain you need to hear. After auditions in Nashville, Jimmy was hired temporarily. His first show with the Statlers took place on January 28, 1982, in Savannah, Georgia. When

Lew's Crohn's disease prevented him from returning, Jimmy was hired permanently that August.

"Lew asked if I'd consider being a full-time Statler Brother. I'd have been an idiot to turn it down," Jimmy says. "I always give him credit. I never wanted to take someone's place, I just wanted to help them continue. People accepted me and knew I was there for a reason."

For twenty-one years, Jimmy traveled the highways with Harold, Phil, and Don. "They were big movie buffs and knew every actor in every film. I was like the little brother tagging along. They took care of me, guarded me, and nurtured me." He still remembers the electricity of that first night in Savannah: "Hearing the crowd roar as we walked onstage - I'll never forget it. Every night for the next 21 years was a highlight."

The Statler Brothers' achievements remain staggering: three Grammy Awards, nine CMA Vocal Group of the Year trophies, and an unprecedented 23 Music City News Fan Awards for Vocal Group of the Year. They also earned multiple honors for Entertainer of the Year, Album, Song, Video, Television Show, and even Comedian of the Year. Their legacy is one of excellence and of deep affection from fans who loved them fiercely.

Jimmy's career carried him to the White House twice - once for President Ronald Reagan and once for President George H. W. Bush. He also sang *Elizabeth* to Elizabeth Taylor as a birthday gift, a moment he still treasures.

But his story is not without valleys. "I was baptized at nine, mostly because I knew my parents would be proud," he says. "I had knowledge of Christ long before I had a relationship with Him." As success grew, so did the pressures of life. A divorce, the strain of the road, and his father's cancer diagnosis weighed heavily. Depression crept in - something he had never faced before.

In March 1993, during a tour stop in Little Rock, Arkansas, Jimmy reached a breaking point. Sitting alone in a hotel room at 1 a.m., he turned on the lamp and saw a Gideon Bible open to Jeremiah 5:25: "Your iniquities have kept good things from you." The words pierced him. "I said, 'Jesus, I want You to come into my heart and clean it all out.'" That night marked a turning point. Though he still faced loss and hardship, he walked through it with a peace he had never known.

When the Statler Brothers retired in October 2002, Jimmy sensed God wasn't closing a door - He was opening one. "He wanted me to keep going, to share my faith and my story. People need to hear about forgiveness and grace."

Two weeks later, Jimmy launched his solo career. His first show took place in Staunton, Virginia, with Harold, Phil, and Don proudly in the audience. In 2002, he hit the road opening for the Oak Ridge Boys, who championed him and helped introduce him as a solo artist.

In 2004, he moved from Virginia to Nashville, a difficult but necessary transition. "God promised me that if I honored Him, He would take care of me. I leaned on that, and He has."

Jimmy's solo career flourished with albums including "When One Door Closes" (2003), "I Believe" (2005), and later his Gaither Music Group releases: "Hits and Hymns" (2015), "Jimmy Fortune Sings the Classics" (2017), and "God and Country" (2019), which won the 2020 Dove Award for Country/Gospel/Roots Album of the Year. His latest project, "Songs of an American Dreamer," revisits Statler classics, solo favorites, and fan-loved tracks.

In 2020, Jimmy joined Ben Isaacs, Mike Rogers, and Bradley Walker to form the quartet now known as Brothers of the Heart, releasing "Brotherly Love" and later "Listen to the Music" (2023). With more music in the works, the group continues to perform select dates each year, blending harmony, friendship, and faith.

Jimmy recently released his autobiography, "Stories of an American Dreamer." Writing it took him deeper into his family's history, back nearly a century. "It starts with my mama and how Miss Grills raised her after my grandma died. She taught her about the Lord, how to read the Bible, how to pray. That foundation led our family to where it is today." Jimmy admits he once wondered why anyone would want to read his story. "But it really is unique. I laughed and cried as the memories came back."

With the help of Dave Clark and his wife of twenty-seven years, Nina, he shaped decades of life into a cohesive narrative. "It wasn't easy, it's not for the faint of heart."

And his story is still unfolding. Jimmy Fortune continues to write, sing, and testify - trusting that God is still directing the path of an American Dreamer.



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BARBARA FAIRCHILD

By Robin Tanner

The extraordinary talent of Country and Gospel music artist Barbara Fairchild makes her one of the finest entertainers with a vibrant personality and a love for humor and storytelling. She also has a sincere warmth that flows out of her to everyone she meets.

Born in Knobel, Arkansas, Barbara was raised on a farm but was entertaining at every opportunity. When she was twelve her family moved to Saint Louis Missouri and within two years she was a regular on a local TV show and began recording songs for a local label, Norman Records.

At age sixteen, her Dad signed for Barbara to join Kapp Records in Nashville and with Jerry Crutchfield's music company as a writer and also her manager. It wasn't long before she met producer Billy Sherrill, who had discovered Tammy Wynette. He listened to Barbara's songs and decided she was ready for a major record deal, and he signed her to Columbia Records in 1969.

Between 1970 and 1972, Barbara scored five top 40 hits. She became a Christian in 1971 and she asked God not to let her have a hit record that would cause her to lose sight of Him. While God honored her prayer, 1973 was a breakthrough year for the singer. Her song, *Teddy Bear* skyrocketed to number one on the Country charts and reached the Pop charts as well. It was nominated for a Grammy that same year. The song is Barbara's most requested and a favorite of audiences everywhere.

Barbara is recognized as one of the finest female entertainers in Country music. She was one of Ralph Emery's favorite guests during the years he hosted the top-rated "Nashville Now" show on The Nashville Network. Ralph even trusted Barbara to be a guest host for him. This added exposure made Barbara Fairchild a household name.

After many years in Country music, Barbara turned her attention to Gospel music. She remembers, "I was pursuing a Country music career at the time and continued on that road for several years. I have made many wonderful life-long friends in that field of music. God allowed me to run that track for a time, but nothing compares to the exceeding greatness of knowing Jesus Christ as my Lord! God had some plans in mind for me that I would never have dreamed of and that part of my life is still being written every day!"

In 1986 she recorded an album with production by her old friend Don Williams that never got released. But with



efforts by special people in her life, it was finally released in early 2024. She joined Tanya Goodman Sykes and Candy Hemphill Christmas in the Gospel group Heirloom in 1989. In 1990, her journey continued in Gospel music when she signed with Benson Music in Nashville.

Barbara made her way back to the Ozarks in the early 1990s when she came to Branson to work for Mel Tillis. In 1992, she formed a Sunday Morning Worship service which was a source of inspiration for thousands of visitors for 25 years. In 1993 She began producing and performing her own show in Branson.

Since the '90s, Barbara has been recognized in the Southern Gospel music field with songs such as *Could You Walk A Mile* and *Turn Right And Go Straight* from her debut Gospel album, "The Light." In 2003, Barbara realized a long-time dream along with two of her best friends in Country music when Sharon White, Connie Smith and Barbara joined Sharon's husband, Ricky Skaggs who produced their album, "Love Never Fails."

Barbara's talent still shines bright. She is seen on the RFD TV-Network along with many of her peers on the popular "Country Family Reunion" and "The Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting," shows hosted by Larry Black and Bill Anderson.



Today Barbara and her husband, Roy, travel and perform concert dates and churches all over the United States. They still conduct a very special Veteran's Service during Veteran's Homecoming Week in November. Barbara and Roy believe we owe more to our Veterans than we could ever repay and

take every opportunity to let our nation's heroes know how important they are.

Barbara released the long awaited album, "All My Cloudy Days Are Gone." This album was produced by her long-time friend Don Williams in 1986 but not released until 2024 - 37 years after its initial recording. You can also hear the Gentle Giant Don Williams harmonizing on the tracks.

Barbara was honored with the Branson Terry Awards 'Living Legend' Award in September 2023. Through her career she has seen much recognition and highlights. She was inducted into the Arkansas Entertainer's Hall of Fame and had a star placed in the Arkansas Walk Way of Fame in Hot Springs, Arkansas. These honors mean a great deal to Barbara because she is very proud of her home state.

In March 2024, Barbara was inducted into the North America Country Music Hall of Fame Association International, (NACMAI) along with artists Randy Travis, John Berry, and Mel Tillis.

Barbara expresses her gratitude for this induction. "All of these artists are amazing, every one of them! I feel so blessed in my life to do the things I have done. I told the Lord I have done far beyond anything I ever dreamed. You blessed me to do what I love. But if there is more you want me to do, I will go do them. I am blessed with the honors, but at the end of the day I will take all the 'Thank you's' and the recognition and lay them at the feet of Jesus. It's all about Him."

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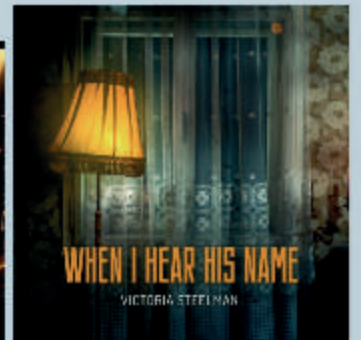
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There are numerous super-session musicians in Nashville, but very few with the longevity of Charlie McCoy. In addition to being a fixture in Nashville studios for over sixty years, he also has his own recording career.

The extraordinary harmonica player served as the music director for eighteen years for the syndicated television series, “Hee Haw.” At 85, The Grand Ole Opry and Country Music Hall of Fame member Charlie McCoy is still enjoying the blessing of an extraordinary career and a God-given talent.

CHARLIE MCCOY

The Musician and the Man

By Robin Tanner

Charlie McCoy had a connection to Hank Williams before he knew anything about the Country legend. Charlie was born in Oak Hill, West Virginia. It was the town where Hank Williams passed away in the back of the car at the only gas station in Oak Hill. The driver was in route to take Hank to Canton, Ohio for a New Year’s Eve concert. Hank’s death was confirmed at the hospital where Charlie McCoy was born.

Charlie recalls, “I was eleven when Hank passed away and I didn’t know anything about him at that time. Then, of course, when I moved to Nashville in 1960, I found out real quick who he was! I realized how important he was to Country music. He was only 29 years old with no high school education, but the songs he wrote are still popular seventy years later.”

Charlie’s family moved to Miami, Florida when he was nine. He attended a very musical high school and took Music Theory in the 12th Grade and began playing guitar in Rock

& Roll bands. During a Country music dance, his job was playing Rock & Roll ten minutes each hour. Charlie shares his encounter meeting a Country artist that night. “Mel Tillis came in and heard me perform. I didn’t know who he was. He said, ‘Boy, if you come to Nashville I will get you on records tomorrow.’ That was like throwing a steak to a wolf! The day after graduation, I went to Nashville and met Mel’s manager and publisher, Jim Denny, and he said, ‘Mel told me about you.’”

Charlie auditioned for two iconic producers, Chet Atkins and Owen Bradley. He played the guitar and sang Chuck Berry’s, *Johnny B. Goode*. Charlie admits, “They both turned me down, but Owen Bradley invited me to a recording session. I saw a thirteen-year-old, Brenda Lee record one of her first hits. When I watched that session and heard the first playback, I said, I don’t want to be a singer, I want to do this!”

McCoy went back to the University of Miami School of Music, dropped out before the year was over and went back

to Nashville. "My father was so upset because it was his dream for me to go to college. He forgave me years later when I introduced him to Dolly Parton!"

He moved in with a songwriter, Kent Westberry, who became a Nashville Songwriter Association Hall of Famer and wrote many hit songs. Charlie remembers how that friendship opened the door in the beginning of his career. "Every day, people would come over and write. I was fascinated and would sit and listen. One day, Kent was working on a song and asked me to play my harmonica. It sounded great and I played on the demo session."

"A month passes, and I get a call from Chet Atkins. He asked, 'Are you the guy that played harmonica on that song.' Yes Sir, I am! He wanted me on the session and to play the way I did on the demo. He was recording a young girl from Sweden named Ann Margaret. At twenty years old, I walked in the session and Chet said, 'I know you!' I said, Yes, I auditioned for you two years ago. 'You played a Gibson and sang *Johnny B. Goode*. I wish you would have played that harmonica for me!' The greatest part about that session was when Bob Moore walked up and said, 'You free Friday?' At that time, I was free the rest of my life! He was recording Roy Orbison and I was already a huge fan! We recorded the song *Candy Man*. The record hit the radio and my phone started ringing, and it's been 63 years and it's still ringing."

Charlie began working sessions in the early 60s and became one of the most in-demand session players in Nashville known as the A-Team. He has played over 12,000 sessions. His session credits are literally a who's who of Country music. In addition to Country sessions, Charlie was a mainstay on Elvis Presley recordings both in Nashville and Los Angeles. When Bob Dylan recorded *Highway 61, Blonde On Blonde, John Wesley Harding*, and *Nashville Skyline*, Charlie was there, playing on these landmark recordings. He was also heard on Simon and Garfunkle's *The Boxer* He has toured across the U.S. and made appearances in Europe and Japan.

Charlie shares out of the thousands of sessions which ones stand out to him. "My favorite song I played on was Tom T. Hall's, *Old Dogs, Children And Watermelon Wine*. The biggest Country record I played on was George Jones' *He Stopped Loving Her Today* or *Delta Dawn* by Tanya Tucker. I didn't play harmonica but some of the biggest records I played on was baritone saxophone on *Pretty Women* by Roy Orbison, Trumpet on *Everybody Must Get Stoned* with Bob Dylan and I played organ on *Easy Lovin'* by Freddie Hart. I was the guy who tuned the guitar on Bobby Bare's *Detroit City*. Those classic songs of the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s are going to last a lot longer than some of these songs today."

Charlie also played on *I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool* by Barbara Mandrell, Loretta Lynn, *When The Tingle Becomes A Chill*, Dolly Parton's *My Tennessee Mountain Home*, *Play, Guitar Play* by Conway Twitty, Johnny Paycheck's hit, *Take This Job And Shove It* and thousands of other hits and recordings.

Artists that Charlie has played for include, Jerry Lee Lewis, Waylon Jennings, Blake Shelton, Marie Osmond, Ray Stevens, Willie Nelson, Wynonna, Carl Perkins, Fats Domino, The Oak Ridge Boys, Connie Smith, Tammy Wynette, Roy Acuff, Paul Simon, Charley Pride, The Jordanaires, Bill Anderson, Gene Watson, Pasty Cline, Brenda Lee, Jim Reeves, The Happy Goodman Family and many others.



He won a Grammy in 1972 for his album, "The Real McCoy." He won CMA's "Instrumentalist Of The Year" two times and the Academy Of Country Music's "Specialty Instrument Award." Charlie was a member of a legendary recording band, Area Code 615. The band featured many of the top session players in Nashville. Charlie is predominantly known as a harmonica player, but his musical talents include guitar, bass, mallet percussion, (vibes, marimba, bells), keyboards, and various wind instruments. In addition to "Hee Haw", Charlie served as music director for other television shows including playing in the house band for the TNN show "Music City Tonight" with Crook and Chase.



Charlie on stage with Lynn Fox and Brenda Lee at Sunday Mornin' Country

Charlie reminisces about his legendary career. "It's been so amazing! For many years I was so busy. I was doing more than three hundred sessions a year. Then all the perks that came along with it. Hee Haw, The West Virginia Hall of Fame, The Country Music Hall of Fame, and the Musicians Hall of Fame. Then the real icing on the cake was in 2022. I was made a member of the Grand Ole Opry."

Sunday Mornin' Country is celebrating forty-four years this month and Charlie has been a major part of most of them. It's always a highlight when Charlie's harmonica rings through the Opry House at this historic event. He states, "I started it when Joe Babcock, who was a member of the Nashville Edition and on Hee Haw, invited me. The first time I played was in 1990. I have missed a few years traveling abroad but I have made a bunch of them."

"I was fortunate when I first got to Nashville. I got with friends who were worship leaders at a church. They invited me to come join them and I did that," says Charlie concerning his love for the Lord. "I enjoyed doing that, I really got into the message. A friend from Holland that I played with in Europe and who didn't believe in God, asked me a question. 'Tell me why you believe what you believe?' I said that was easy. #1, It happened over two thousand years ago, and the church is still going strong. #2, The Bible was written by many people who had no cell phones or no way of communicating and lived miles apart, but the theme of the Bible is constant all the way through. Then the third thing, Israel is the country that is surrounded by people who want

them off the face of the earth, but they continue to thrive, and you can't deny those three things. I have also recorded three Gospel albums so far because I do believe it! I've been more blessed than I thought I deserved to be. I thank the good Lord for it every day!"

Charlie's latest musical venture is a Bluegrass album, "Breaking New Ground," - his forty-eighth album. The project has twenty tracks featuring special guests Jeannie Seely, Rhonda Vincent, Kathy Mattea and many more. "This has been so much fun putting it together," Charlie mentions.

Charlie continues to tour, including dates with Jason Coleman who is Floyd Cramer's grandson and who was also part of the A-Team. He is still working sessions in the studio. He admits, "I still love it! I just want to go in with great musicians and play for people that want to be there and have a love for it."

Now that he is a member of the Opry and played it many times last year, he foresees being a frequent artist in that iconic circle.

The harmonica virtuoso has great advice to young musicians. "When I was with the A-Team, I was young and excited and wanted to play! One day my hero Grady Martin took me outside and gave me advice. 'You got to calm down. Listen and don't interrupt the words and play in between them.' Harold Bradley, Owen Bradley's brother, walked over after the session. 'I saw Grady take you outside, what did he tell you?' He said I was playing too much and he was right!"

"The motto of the A-team is 'the singer and the song are the picture and we are the frame.' My advice for a new musician, it's more important to know where not to play than where to play. But when it is your turn, do something that fits the lyrics and fits the song."

"I think even though the music style has changed we still have great artists. These people give their heart and soul to Country music and if you can get a chance to come to Nashville, visit the Country Music Hall of Fame, the RCA Studio B tour which was the first place I recorded with Ann Margaret and Roy Orbison. The Grand Ole Opry is so great. We have veteran artists and feature newcomers and there is a good mix. The band and background singers are so great. It's so much fun to do it. For me it's a 25-minute drive. Play three songs to the greatest audience in the world. What's not to like?!"

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CrossCountry **HOT 100**

OFFICIAL CHRISTIAN COUNTRY TOP 100 - JUNE 2026

TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST	TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST
1	10	Shout Of Testimony	Mike Lechner	51	22	Honey In The Rock	Mary James
2	4	Everything You Do	Norman Lee Schaffer	52	86	My Tiny Soul	JW Jackson
3	9	Say Hello To Heaven	Steve Warren	53	36	Meanwhile Back At The Cross	Ron Hemphill
4	8	He Made It All	Dust And Grace	54	69	Heading Home With Jesus To Be	Lizzy G And Jeff Naper
5	13	What I Don't Know	Paula Slow	55	17	Blood Bought Cowboy	Marty Deroche
6	15	It'll Be Good To Be Home	The Journeys	56	79	Tell Me That There Ain't A God	Jon Brennan
7	7	Get Out Of The Boat	Felicia Deramus Paul	57	68	Jesus Is The Way	Rachel Taylor
8	1	I've Been Thinking	Waymasters	58	80	If I'm Guilty	Thomas Brown
9	19	Jesus Loves Me	Dierks Bentley	59	20	If That Ain't True Love	Melanie Walker
10	25	Whiskey Road	Michael Tetrick	60	32	Blessings	Steven Paul McCollum
11	6	Heaven Sweet Home	Blake Shelton	61	23	When Love Arose	Joy LaVallee
12	3	New Man	Chuck Day	62	42	You Can't Box Me In	Fortner Brothers
13	33	Song For My Son	Walker Hayes	63	78	Cherished Memories	Jeff Hamilton
14	24	What I Got (La-De-Da)	Caleb Deramus	64	-	He'll Never Stop Being Good	Sunday Drive
15	31	He Lives	Ed Bruce	65	77	Getting Back Up	Troy Richardson
16	28	It's Time, Lord	Eddy Mann	66	51	God Don't Waste The Hurt	Gary Russ
17	41	Looking For The Light	Delnora	67	91	There's Power In The Name Of Jesus	Jonathan Ray Smith
18	57	Jesus Is The King	Ken Mobley	68	92	Somebody Here	Linda Lanier
19	12	Warrior Of God	Mark Umfleet	69	73	Walking Out Of Egypt	One Voice
20	30	This One's For You	Rocky and Tamie	70	35	The Crossroads	Richard Sprayberry
21	27	In Times Like These	Bruce and Betsy Mullen	71	-	Healer	Allen Frizzell
22	49	In The Morning	Hunter Logan	72	87	Beverage Of Choice	Brother Daniel
23	44	Picture This	Jessie Ritchie	73	90	At War With Myself	Cyndi Reynolds
24	40	Hannah Whooped The Devil	Jason Welch	74	88	Wayfaring Stranger	Debbie Bennett
25	2	I Saw A Miracle Today	Michael Ray Fain	75	96	Soldier Of The Cross	John Penney
26	16	Wish You Were Here	Johnathan Bond	76	89	River Of Life	Sonshine Road
27	34	Somebody Bigger Than You And I	David Smith	77	55	Jesus To The Rescue	Beverly Brown Simms
28	14	Why Me Lord	Richard Lynch	78	95	I Was There	Jerry Weatherly
29	37	The Most Perfect Gift	Clare Cunningham	79	38	Greatly To Be Praised	Melissa Evans
30	5	Waiting In The Water	Debbie Mills	80	84	Someday Things Are Gonna Get Better	Johnny Jones
31	11	Three Nails And A Cross	George Strait	81	53	You Can Talk To The Father	Richard Strong
32	45	Saving Grace	Krystina B	82	60	Hand In Heaven	The Murphys ft. Abigail
33	18	You Can Call On Him	Aaron Partridge and Steve Apirana	83	83	Snowy Sunday Morning	Biscuits and Gravy Band Indiana
34	65	The Bridge	Daryl Baker	84	-	The Good In Bye	Small Town Sunday
35	52	Let Me tell Ya' Bout My Faith	Kali Rose	85	50	God Talks To Me	Dawson Road
36	46	God Is Good Ya'll	Wings of Love	86	64	That's The Least That I Can Do	Greg Marlow
37	93	Preacher Man	David Timms	87	98	Real Good Day	Kevin Morris
38	74	Why Me	Jenny Dean	88	66	Footprints In The Sand	Dwight Sanders
39	62	Brothers And Sisters	Ken Lehning	89	61	The Journey	Joe Land
40	48	Take Over Me	Rex Robards	90	99	The Promise	Charity Hamilton
41	59	Edge Of Heaven	Scott Peacock	91	94	Just A Little Talk With Jesus	Ray Epperson
42	54	Gods Great	The Messengers	92	97	You Got It	Royal Clark
43	71	When I Hear His Name	Victoria Steelman	93	-	Sunday's Best	Shellem Cline
44	75	That's The Way Mama Raised Me	Luke Hendrickson	94	-	Angels Among Us	Dale Rochell
45	70	The Turn	The Pauls	95	100	I'm From The US Of A	Roger Barkley Jr
46	21	Man From Galilee	Jennifer Sides	96	-	Strength Of A Survivor	Aaron Justice
47	76	The Last Song	Terry and Debra Luna	97	-	House Of Fire	Lonnie Hardy
48	26	Pushing You Away	Mike McAdoo	98	-	Georgiana Alabama 1939	Michael Ray Fain
49	39	Don't Cry For Me	Teresa Johnson	99	-	Chandelier Angel	Danny Mullins
50	63	My God Can	Valerie Ellis Hawkins	100	-	Little More Like Jesus	Dave Edwards



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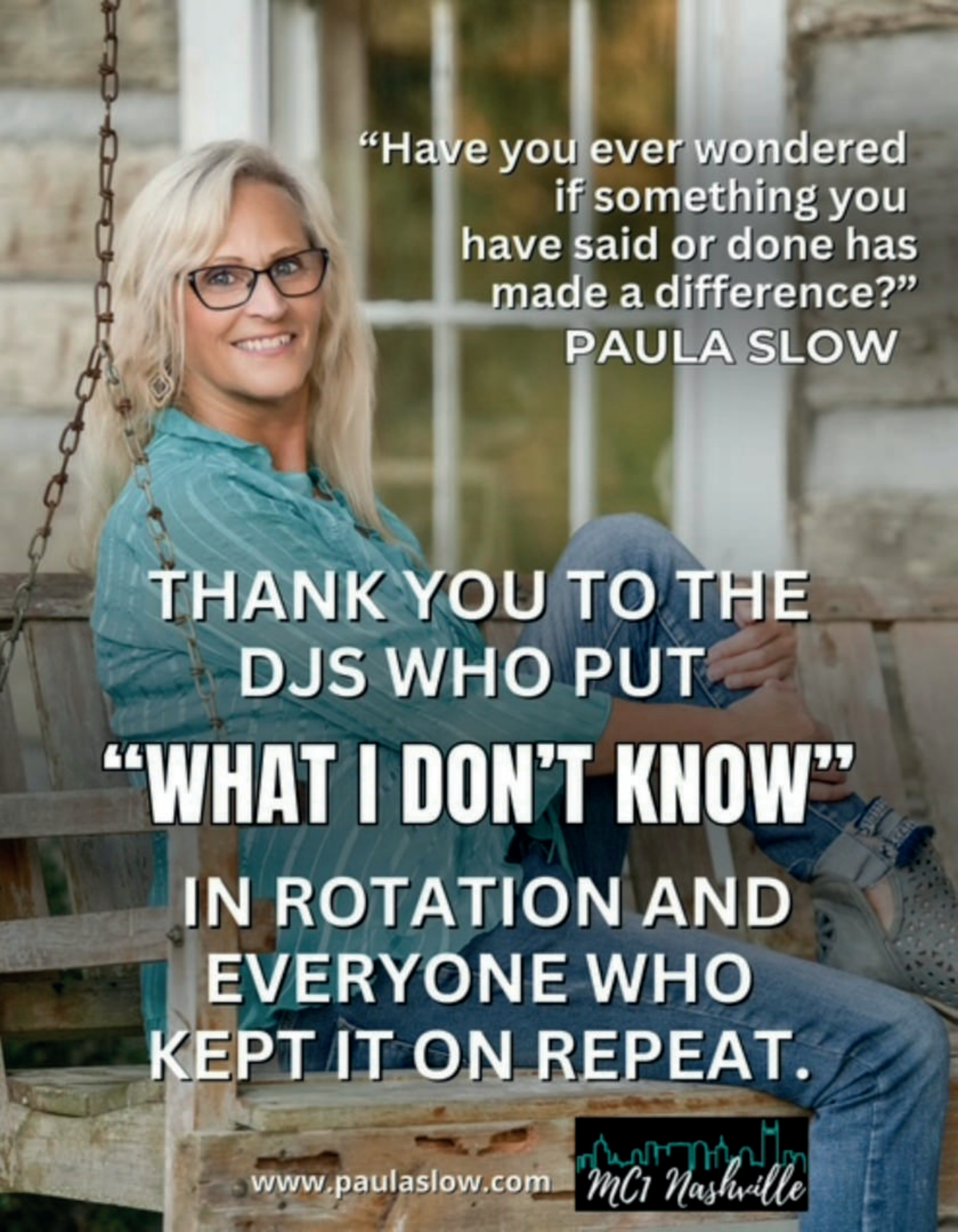
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The Voice of
Modern Country:

MAKENZIE PHIPPS

Steps Into Her
Moment

By Robin Tanner

There's a grounded honesty in MaKenzie Phipps' voice - the kind that comes from small-town roots, church pews, and a lifetime of singing long before she ever stepped onto a national stage. From Bluefield, Virginia, to Nashville, Tennessee, her journey has been shaped by faith, family, and a deep love for the women of Country music who paved the way before her.

Fresh off a standout run on NBC's *The Voice* - where Snoop Dogg turned his chair in a last-second, emotional moment - MaKenzie is stepping into a new chapter with her first EP, a collection that showcases her songwriting, her storytelling, and the raw vulnerability she brings to every lyric.

Makenzie shares life growing up in Bluefield, Virginia. "It's a small town where everybody knows everybody. They've always known me as the little girl with the big voice. I started singing in church, and my MawMaw was the one who realized I had a gift. She taught me hymns and encouraged me to sing at Sunday service.

Makenzie started performing publicly at age fourteen. Back then, this little girl only played piano and hauled a full-size keyboard everywhere. "Eventually, I picked up the guitar and learned it quickly. That's when I realized: I can really make this a career," she remembers. "I'm fortunate to love what I do!"

From playing fairs, festivals, and honky tonks, Makenzie is spreading her love of music in a whole new way. But it is that talented little girl that has grown into a young woman whose talents shine brighter with each and every song she puts out - from her viral covers of *I Want To Stroll Over Heaven With You* and *Amazing Grace* to her latest music.

Makenzie released her debut EP "Pick Your Poison" in March. She recalls the process of working on the much-anticipated EP. "I am so excited for my first-ever EP. It's been in the works for a while. The EP features five tracks including the title cut, *Pick Your Poison*, and *Love Me Sober* which centers around alcoholism. It affects not just the person going through it but their loved ones too. I wrote it to remind people they are not alone and there are resources."



doing. He made sure we had Team Snoop gear, and even after I was eliminated, his team kept supporting us. He even brought all the eliminated contestants to perform at the Steelers & Chargers halftime show. I'm so grateful!"

From that church in Bluefield, Makenzie still clings to her faith. "I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing without the Lord giving me this gift. I give Him all the glory and praise. I believe He put me on this earth to sing and share my music."

Family has been there to offer their support and encouragement even moving to Nashville with their daughter. "It meant everything. They packed up their whole lives - the only life they'd ever known - to help me chase this dream. That's not something I take for granted."

Even Bluefield still remembers that little girl with the big voice. They honored Makenzie with a special day with the key

Her new single *Won't Be Here Forever* honors her mother and paints a heartfelt dedication to her biggest fan. She also has a new partnership with JTV (Jewelry TV).

Phipps mentions female artists that influenced her. "The woman who got me into Country music in the first place was Loretta Lynn. She's the Queen of Country - always will be. When I was little, I'd climb on the kitchen counters and sing her songs at the top of my lungs. I wish I could've met her. Another huge influence is Ashley McBryde. I first saw her opening for Miranda back in 2019, and I've looked up to her ever since. Her songwriting inspires me to keep going, no matter how long it takes. I've met her twice - once in Walmart and once at the Opry - and I even have a lyric from her song, *Not Bad For A Girl Going Nowhere* tattooed on my forearm."

Most recently, Makenzie appeared on the latest season of *The Voice*, further showcasing her undeniable vocal talent to a national audience. She auditioned and made it passed the blind auditions and to the battle rounds on Team Snoop. She shares her experience and memories that will last a lifetime. "Just being selected is an honor - thousands audition. My friends and I were all nervous we wouldn't even get the chance to perform because there are only 48 slots. I was on the last day of auditions and had prepared myself for the possibility I wouldn't get to go. They finally called my name and standing behind those doors, I just prayed: 'God, use me as a vessel. Help me make it through this.' During the audition Snoop turned his chair at the very last second. I still cry watching that moment back. It's something I'll never forget."

Naturally, being on Team Snoop was amazing. She shared what the rapper was like as a coach. "He was fantastic. I truly believe the Lord made it the way it was supposed to be. At first, I thought Reba would be my dream coach because I've sung her songs for years. But Snoop? He was one of the most involved coaches of our season. He cared about what we were

to the town and declared December 6th 'MaKenzie Phipps Day.' "So, many people showed up - friends, family, community members. It meant the world. They've supported me since I was the little girl singing at 4-H talent shows, and now as a woman paving her way in Nashville."



"This year, I've really focused on songwriting and diving deeper into my music. I have my whole year planned with releases, and I can't wait for people to hear them. I'm still doing shows in Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, but I'm also working hard on my catalog and growing as an artist. If I ever became a household name like Loretta Lynn, Miranda Lambert, or Lainey Wilson, I'd be perfectly fine with that. But honestly? I'm just grateful to be doing what I love."

Makenziehipps.com



ARE YOU RAPTURE READY?

Luke Hendrickson talks about his new book, "Rapture Ready: Don't Fear of be Deceived"



"Rapture Ready: Don't Fear or Be Deceived" by Luke Hendrickson is available on Amazon.

No one knows the day or hour of the Lord's return to gather His Bride, so we must always be prepared for the rapture of the Church. We should work to build the Kingdom of God as if Jesus will not return for another thousand years while also maintaining a sense of urgency that He may return tomorrow.

Over the past fifty years or so, misguided teachings have led many in the Church to believe that those who reject the Gospel can achieve salvation through their own merits if they miss the rapture. This book aims to clarify, through a straightforward verse-by-verse format, why this belief is incorrect. It will provide solid biblical proof of this. Individuals who have heard the Gospel and rejected it do not receive a second chance if they are left behind. Our part is to be Spirit-filled and led, effective witnesses in these final days.

This book emphasizes the certainty of the Church being gone before God pours out His wrath. It does not focus on pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, or post-tribulation assumptions. Its main emphasis is the absolute requirement of always being ready. [Mathew 25:10 KJV] *10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.*

There will be a massive resurrection of all the dead in Christ rising at the rapture; this is the first resurrection. [1Th 4:16-17 KJV] *16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17*

Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

[Rev 20:4-6 KJV] *4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received [his] mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:4-6 provides clear evidence that the mark of the beast precedes the rapture or the first resurrection. If you don't see it prayerfully, read these verses again please. The booklet "Rapture Ready" is designed to assist those who may have been misled. All of Satan's lies are rooted in two primary deceptions: the notion that disobedience to God is acceptable and the belief that one can postpone surrendering to the Lord Jesus. I once subscribed to these deceptions, but the Spirit and Word of God have corrected my understanding in this area and others.

My objective is to help precious souls recognize these truths enduring until the end.




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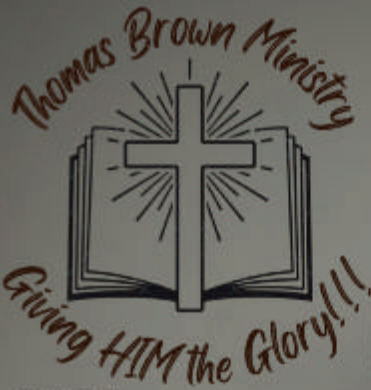

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LEON EVERETTE

By Cory Parker

Leon Everette's story begins in Langly, South Carolina, but his voice was shaped in Queens, New York, where he grew up listening to the legends of Country, Gospel, and Rock 'n' Roll. That blend of grit and soul would later define a career unlike any other.

Before the world knew his name, Everette served his country – twice - as a proud Vietnam veteran. It was during his U.S. Navy service that he discovered his gift, winning a Navy-sponsored talent contest that set his life on a new trajectory. Music wasn't just a calling; it was a mission.

After returning home, Everette formed a band, played local venues, and eventually made the pilgrimage to Nashville. He worked in the mailroom at True Records before partnering with Carroll Fulmer of Orlando Records - proof that even legends start at the bottom.

His debut single, *Over*, soared to #8 on the Billboard charts, catching the attention of RCA Records. What followed was a streak few artists ever achieve: 11 consecutive Top 10 hits, Nine gold albums, ASCAP and BMI awards, The #1 smash *Hurricane*, Grand Marshal of the Louisiana Mardi Gras Parade, and first Country artist to perform in Italy and at Wembley Stadium.

He became a fixture on the Grand Ole Opry, Hee Haw, Nashville Now, Pop Goes the Country, and more. His band, Hurricane, was named 'Traveling Band of the Year,' and in 1983 he became the national spokesperson for Mellow Yellow, recording jingles and appearing on billboards nationwide.

The mid-1980s brought burnout and alcoholism, forcing Everette to step away from the spotlight. But in 1997, everything changed. He gave his life to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the man who once chased stages began chasing purpose.

With his wife, Diane, and their fur baby, Punkin, Everette became a pillar of Faith Community Fellowship in Aiken, South Carolina. His music shifted too - still Country, still electric, but now anchored in Gospel truth.

In 2016, Everette returned to Nashville to record *I Stand the Tallest When I'm Down on My Knees* with Little David Wilkins - a Gospel hit that reignited his career. He now hosts "God and Country Time with Leon Everette and Friends," serves on the World Boxing Group Official Athletic Commission, and continues to perform nationwide.



His biography, "The Good, The Bad and The Blessed," released in 2025, capturing the full sweep of his extraordinary life.

Manager Wesley Fricks puts it simply: "I have never met a greater man in my lifetime... one of the greatest entertainers of all time."

Everette has returned to the Grand Ole Opry and penned the Wounded Warriors anthem *Warriors Fight On*. In 2025, he was inducted into the South Carolina Entertainers and Music Hall of Fame, and on September 19, 2026, he will enter the Josie Music Awards Independent Country Music Hall of Fame.

He now leads GAC Records, a fully integrated label and promotions platform dedicated to excellence in Country and Gospel entertainment.

And through it all, Everette says the same thing: "I'm having more fun now, with Jesus in my band."

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A portrait of Pastor Jonathan Ray Smith, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt and tie. He is smiling and has his hands clasped in front of him. The background is a golden, textured surface with light rays emanating from behind him.

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